4: Pierson Z-4, 5 (1935-1937) 1967
SOll Bahia Brazilians SOll

191.

Although it is exceedingly doubtful if there is in Bahia today anyone of African descent who does not speak Portuguese, a few individuals can and on occasion do converse in Nagô. One may also hear Gêge spoken, as well as those languages known locally as "Angola" and "Congo." However, the use of these tongues is very largely confined to the ritual of the *candomblé*, although at times one hears in the homes of blacks the Nagô greeting, "Ô-kú á-sán!" and the parting salutation, "Ôdí-ôlá-ô!" and even conversations in Nagô. Many African words are to be found in the predominantly Portuguese speech of the lower class, a limited number of which have become common to all Bahia and, to some extent, to all Brazil. Approximately three hundred of the latter were noted.

[794] [796] [576]

192

• 201 565

Certain gestures are to be observed among the lower-class blacks which are not common to the general population; for example, the *legua de beiço*, or slight extension of the lower lip when indicating distance (the words accompanying may be "one league," but the sense is much farther); and the *muxóxó*, or pursing of the lips as the lower portion of the face is pushed forward and upward, signifying disdain. Approbation is indicated by touching the tips of the fingers to pursed lips and withdrawing them while making a kissing sound. Silence is compelled by grasping the upper lip with the tips of the fingers. The act of eating is indicated by closing and opening the right hand before the mouth, and the act of drinking by raising the right hand before the face, flexing the three middle digits, and, with thumb and little finger extended, raising and lowering the hand at the wrist. The height of a human being is demonstrated by extending the

4: Pierson Z-4, 5 (1935-1937) 1967
SOll Bahia Brazilians SOll

palm flat in horizontal position in contrast to a vertical placement for indicating the height of a lower animal.[10]

Although one is not likely to find any Bahian black who has not been given at baptism a "Christian name," nicknames are very common, and many individuals are much better known by them than by their given names. Among such *apelidos* one will occasionally discover terms of probable African derivation; for instance, Okê, Bábá Cumdê, Cobê, Oum, Tau-édê, and Au-weh, all nicknames of members of a local labor union; or, among personages in the fetish world, such names as: Manoelzinho de Oxóssi, Lourenço Lemba, Maria de Tempo, Senhora de Yemanjá, João de Zázé, and Flaviano Cavungo, each of which recalls the African *orixá* to which the individual in question is dedicated.

Exercising considerable prestige among a portion of the Bahian population is the *babalaô*, or *olhador*, whose primary function, it seems, is to foretell the future; the *curandeiro*, who by means of herbs, prayers, and other magical manipulations seeks both to treat and to prevent disease; and the *feiticeiro*, or "witch doctor," who, for a price, works black magic. The office of the *babalaô* is occasionally exercised by the *pae de santo*, or priest of the fetish cult, although his function is more particularly that of supervising the rituals and public ceremonies of the cult and overseeing the sacred properties. To some extent he also exercises the function of a *curandeiro*.

[10] A form of greeting recalled by older blacks but rarely used today is as follows: If the individuals are social equals, each lifts his hands, palms outward, and grasps the hands of the other in such a way that the fingers of the one are interlaced with the fingers of the other, after which the "*egun* grip" is exchanged; if not social equals, the individual of greater prestige places his right hand over the closed hands of the other.